

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 12991

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, PINS, UR
SUBJECT: MORE ON THE DEMONSTRATION IN TBILISI

REF: MOSCOW 8097

1. TBILISI REFUSENIK AND HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST ISAY
GOL'DSHEYN RECENTLY GAVE US HIS VERSION OF THE MASS
DEMONSTRATION IN THE GEORGIAN CAPITAL, AS WELL AS AN
UNSUBSTANTIATED BUT APPARENTLY WIDE-SPREAD THEORY ABOUT
THE EVENT. GOL'DSHEYN DID NOT PERSONALLY WITNESS THE
DEMONSTRATION, BUT SAYS HE HAS TALKED WITH NUMEROUS
PARTICIPANTS. AS HE TELLS IT:

--THE DEMONSTRATION BEGAN MID-DAY AT THE UNIVERSITY,
WAS LED BY AN ELDERLY PROFESSOR OF THE GEORGIAN
LANGUAGE, SHANIDZE;
--DEMONSTRATORS NUMBERED ABOUT 2,000 AND CONSISTED
MOSTLY OF GEORGIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND PROFESSORS;
--AT NO TIME DID LOCAL AUTHORITIES ATTEMPT TO HALT
THE AFFAIR;

--A SMALL GROUP OF STUDENTS BEGAN TO DEMONSTRATE FOR
THE RELEASE OF GAMSAKHURDIA, BUT OTHERS REPORTEDLY
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PERSUADED THE GROUP TO KEEP QUIET ABOUT GAMSAKHURDIA AND
FOCUS ONLY ON THE LANGUAGE ISSUE;

--WHEN THE CROWD REACHED THE GOVERNMENT BUILDING,
REPUBLIC PARTY BOSS SHEVARDNADZE CAME OUT AND ADDRESSED
THE ASSEMBLAGE IN PATERNAL TERMS, WHICH REPORTEDLY
EVOKED SOME CURSES FROM THE CROWD;

--SHEVARDNADZE DISAPPEARED FOR A WHILE, THEN REAPPEARED BEFORE THE CROWD TO ANNOUNCE THAT GEORGIAN WAS STILL THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF THE REPUBLIC.

2. GOL'DSHTEYN SAID THAT THE FOLLOWING EXPLANATION OF THE DEMONSTRATION WAS WIDE-SPREAD AMONG HIS ACQUAINTANCES IN TBILISI:

--AFTER PUBLICATION OF THE DRAFT GEORGIAN CONSTITUTION, IN WHICH THE GEORGIAN LANGUAGE WAS NOT SPECIFIED AS THE REPUBLIC'S OFFICIAL LANGUAGE, SHEVARDNADZE RECEIVED A FLOOD OF LETTERS, TELEGRAMS, AND PHONE CALLS FROM CONCERNED GEORGIANS;

--SHEVARDNADZE REPORTEDLY TRIED, UNSUCCESSFULLY, TO REVERSE MOSCOW'S DECISION ON THE STATUS OF THE GEORGIAN LANGUAGE;

--THE GEORGIAN KGB AND PARTY APPARATUS KNEW ABOUT THE DEMONSTRATION WELL IN ADVANCE OF THE EVENT, BUT DID NOT INTERVENE BECAUSE THEY WERE "MORE GEORGIAN THAN KGB OR CPSU";

--IN THE INTERVAL BETWEEN HIS TWO APPEARANCES BEFORE THE CROWD, SHEVARDNADZE USED HIS "HOT-LINE" TO CALL CONFIDENTIAL

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MOSCOW, REPORT THAT HE HAD AN ANGRY CROWD ON HIS HANDS, AND, THIS TIME SUCCESSFULLY, URGE THAT GEORGIAN BE RESTORED AS THE REPUBLIC'S OFFICIAL LANGUAGE.

3. GOL'DSHTEYN SAID HE DID NOT KNOW IF THIS RUMOR WAS TRUE, BUT HE WAS CERTAIN THAT TBILISI AUTHORITIES COULD EASILY HAVE NIPPED THE DEMONSTRATION IN THE BUD, HAD THEY BEEN ORDERED TO DO SO. MATLOCK

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